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050807Z Oct 01

CONFIDENTIAL PTQ8793

PAGE 01 HARARE 02970 01 OF 02 051316Z  
ACTION AF-00

|             |         |         |         |         |             |        |         |
|-------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------------|--------|---------|
| INFO        | LOG-00  | CIAE-00 | DODE-00 | SRPP-00 | EUR-00      | VC-00  | H-01    |
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9892  
INFO NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 002970

SIPDIS

NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JENDAYI FRAZER  
LONDON FOR GURNEY  
PARIS FOR NEARY  
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: DECL. 09/28/11  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [Z1](#)  
SUBJECT: MDC MP PREDICTS JANUARY PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

CLASSIFIED BY POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF MATT HARRINGTON. REASONS:  
1.5 (B) AND (D).

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION IN JANUARY?  
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11. (C) IN A BRIEF SEPTEMBER 27 CONVERSATION WITH POLITICAL SECTION CHIEF, MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC) MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT DAVID COLTART SHARED HIS VIEWS ON SEVERAL SIMMERING POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS. REGARDING THE STILL UNSCHEDULED 2002 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, THE MDC MP SAID IT WOULD BE VERY CLOSE, AND MOBILIZATION OF VOTERS WAS CRUCIAL FOR BOTH ZANU-PF AND THE MDC. HE NOTED THAT THE CONSTITUTION REQUIRES THAT THE ELECTION BE HELD WITHIN 90 DAYS PRIOR TO THE EXPIRATION OF THE CURRENT PRESIDENT'S MANDATE. SINCE MUGABE'S MANDATE EXPIRES ON APRIL 1, 2002, THE ELECTION MUST BE HELD BETWEEN JANUARY 1 AND MARCH 31. CURRENT ELECTORAL LAW REQUIRES ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE ELECTION BETWEEN FIVE AND EIGHT WEEKS IN ADVANCE, AND COLTART SAID SEVERAL SIGNS POINTED TO AN EARLY JANUARY ELECTION. FIRST, IT WILL BE EASIER FOR RURAL VOTERS -- ZANU-PF'S TRADITIONAL STRONGHOLD -- TO GET TO POLLING STATIONS IN JANUARY, WHEN THERE IS NORMALLY A LAPSE IN THE RAINY SEASON, AS OPPOSED TO FEBRUARY AND MARCH, WHEN THE RAINS ARE HEAVIEST. IN ADDITION, THE IMPENDING MAIZE SHORTAGE IS EXPECTED TO HIT HARDEST TOWARD THE END OF THE 90-DAY PERIOD. THIRD, IT MIGHT BE DIFFICULT TO MOUNT AN EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION EFFORT SO SOON AFTER THE CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS. LAST, IF THE RESULTS OF A JANUARY ELECTION ARE INCONCLUSIVE, MUGABE WOULD HAVE TWO MONTHS -- UNTIL HIS TERM EXPIRES -- TO MANIPULATE THE PROCESS IN HIS FAVOR.

ELECTORAL MISCHIEF  
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12. (C) ACCORDING TO COLTART, ZANU-PF'S BOTTOM-LINE STRATEGY IS TO INCREASE THE VOTE IN COMMUNAL FARMING AREAS --- WHERE ITS SUPPORT  
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HARARE 02970 01 OF 02 051316Z  
IS STRONGEST -- AND TO SUPPRESS THE URBAN, COMMERCIAL FARMER, AND FARMWORKER VOTE -- AMONG WHOM THE MDC ENJOYS SOLID SUPPORT. COLTART HAD THE DAY BEFORE VISITED HWEDZA, A TOWN APPROXIMATELY 150 KM SOUTHEAST OF HARARE TORN IN RECENT WEEKS BY AN INTENSIFIED CAMPAIGN AGAINST FARMERS AND FARMWORKERS. FARMING ACTIVITY HAD CEASED ENTIRELY ON 24 OF THE 45 COMMERCIAL FARMS IN THE AREA, COLTART REPORTED. ON 19 OF THOSE 24, THERE WERE NO WORKERS LEFT, AS THEY HAD BEEN FORCQNTO HIDING BY ZANU-PF'S MILITIA. COLTART SAID HE HAS TOLD THE COMMERCIAL FARMERS UNION (CFU) LEADERSHIP THAT THEY MUST DO MORE TO PUBLICIZE WHAT IS HAPPENING IN HWEDZA AND IN OTHER AREAS. TOWARD THAT END, HE SUGGESTED THAT THE CFU HOLD WEEKLY NEWS CONFERENCES AT WHICH THEY SHOW VIDEO FOOTAGE, BUT HE SAID THE ORGANIZATION PREFERS TO KEEP A LOW PROFILE AND AVOID BURNING ITS BRIDGES WITH GOVERNMENT.

13. (C) ASKED WHETHER VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION WOULD KEEP URBAN VOTERS AWAY FROM THE POLLS, COLTART SAID NO, BUT MENTIONED OTHER TACTICS WHICH COULD KEEP THEM AT HOME ON ELECTION DAY. ONE WOULD BE TO REDUCE SIGNIFICANTLY THE NUMBER OF POLLING STATIONS IN URBAN AREAS, MAKING ACCESS TO THE BALLOT BOX DIFFICULT FOR THOSE WITHOUT RELIABLE MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION. HE NOTED THAT 170 POLLING STATIONS WERE USED IN BULAWAYO FOR THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN JUNE 2000, IN CONTRAST TO 71 FOR THE SEPTEMBER 2001 MAYORAL VOTE,

ONE POSSIBLE EXPLANATION FOR THE LOW TURNOUT IN THE LATTER ELECTION. COLTART ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT ZANU-PF MIGHT ARRANGE FOR ITS SUPPORTERS TO DOUBLE- OR TRIPLE-VOTE. ONE APPROACH THEY MIGHT EMPLOY, COLTART SURMISED, WOULD BE TO ENSURE THAT SELECTED POLLING STATIONS ARE SUPERVISED BY SYMPATHETIC PRESIDING OFFICERS WILLING TO OVERLOOK THE INDELIBLE INK PLACED ON VOTERS' HANDS WHEN THEY CAST A BALLOT.

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 HARARE 02970 01 OF 02 051316Z  
U.S. TRIP  
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14. (U) COLTART MENTIONED THAT HE WOULD BE IN NEW YORK ON PERSONAL BUSINESS FOR SEVERAL DAYS BEGINNING OCTOBER 9. HE ALSO PLANS TO VISIT WASHINGTON OCTOBER 15-16, WHEN HE WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR MEETINGS WITH USG OFFICIALS.

COMMENT  
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15. (C) THE RULING PARTY'S STRATEGY OF INCREASING TURNOUT IN RURAL COMMUNAL AREAS AND SUPPRESSING THE URBAN VOTE IS PROBABLY THE BEST METHOD AVAILABLE TO ZANU-PF IN ITS QUEST TO RETAIN POWER. URBAN VOTERS ARE UNLIKELY TO BE DETERRED, HOWEVER, BY MANY OF THE OBSTACLES THROWN IN THEIR WAY, AND WE EXPECT THEM TO TURN OUT IN LARGE NUMBERS ON ELECTION DAY. THE RESIDENTS OF CITIES AND TOWNS HAVE THUS FAR BORNE THE BRUNT OF ZIMBABWE'S ECONOMIC COLLAPSE, AND THEY ARE ANXIOUSLY AWAITING THE OPPORTUNITY TO CAST THEIR BALLOTS.

16. (C) REGARDING THE TIMING OF THE ELECTION, COLTART MAKES A LOGICAL CASE FOR EARLY JANUARY. HOWEVER, A LAPSE IN THE RAINY

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CONFIDENTIAL PTQ8801

PAGE 01 HARARE 02970 02 OF 02 051317Z  
ACTION AF-00

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|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|
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P 050807Z OCT 01  
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9893  
INFO NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 HARARE 002970

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SEASON IS FAR FROM A SURE THING; IN 2000, A DRY SPELL OCCURRED IN DECEMBER AND NONE AT ALL THE YEAR BEFORE THAT. ZANU-PF'S CHIEF WHIP IN PARLIAMENT, JORAM GUMBO, TOLD US ON OCTOBER 2 THAT THE RULING PARTY WOULD NOT BE READY FOR A JANUARY ELECTION AND NOTED  
CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 HARARE 02970 02 OF 02 051317Z  
THAT A THIRD OF THE COUNTRY LIKELY WOULD BE INACCESSIBLE THEN, MAKING CAMPAIGNING -- AND VOTING -- IMPOSSIBLE IN ZANU-PF'S HEARTLAND. GUMBO SAID THE PARTY'S PREFERENCE WOULD BE APRIL (N.B. WHICH WOULD BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL), BY WHICH TIME THE RAINS USUALLY HAVE SLACKENED. WE CAN ONLY SURMISE THAT GUMBO HAS YET TO FACTOR THE LOOMING FOOD SHORTAGES EXPECTED NEXT SPRING INTO HIS CALENDAR.

SULLIVAN

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